



DIOCESE  
OF ST. PETERSBURG

Pastoral Center

Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
Office of the Secretary  
445 12th St., SW  
Room TW 204B  
Washington, D.C. 20554

May 28, 2003

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Re: Informal Comments, MB Dkt. No. 02 277 / MM Dkt. No. 01 235; MM Dkt. No. 01 317; MM Dkt. No. 00 244

Dear Ms. Secretary:

The Catholic Diocese of St. Petersburg submits the following informal comments in the above referenced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, released September 23, 2002.

We are concerned about the erosion of local news and public affairs programming caused by the Federal Communications Commission's and Congress' weakening of broadcast ownership limits, and the FCC's elimination of broadcast rules that formerly permitted the FCC and the community to monitor broadcasters to ensure that broadcasters served their community of license with programs meeting community needs and interests. Theoretically deregulation should have worked however small operations have been squeezed out by large corporations who control the news that reaches our community. In our area the large corporations are Clear Channel and Cox.

Our diocese urges the FCC to refrain from making changes in the current rules which (a) prohibit crossownership of broadcast stations and newspapers in the same community, (b) limit the number of television and radio stations a single entity may own in a single community, (c) set a national ownership cap for television station at an already overly generous 35% of households, and (d) prohibit common ownership of major television networks. Cable television already is dominated by the same companies that dominate television and satellite systems and the programming on those systems, and those same companies are moving into providing Internet access. Neither cable nor the Internet (whether offered through cable or telephone companies) offer meaningful alternatives to the already scarce supply of truly local news and local public affairs programs on over the air on television and radio.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Jo Murphy, Director of Communications  
Diocese of St. Petersburg

cc: Senator Bob Graham, Senator Bill Nelson, Representative Michael Bilirakis,  
Representative Jim Davis, Representative Dan Miller, Representative Adam H. Putnam,  
Representative Karen Thurman and Representative G.W. "Bill" Young